



State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South • PO Box 94987 • Lincoln, NE 68509
Country Inn & Suites
5353 North 27th
Lincoln, NE
November 14, 2007
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Public notice of upcoming meetings will be available on the Department of Education website under “conferences & meetings” at least 5 days prior to each meeting.

Present: *Debra Bauer, Sharon Bloechle, Linda Douglas, Katie Durfee, Alvin Fox, Sue Gieschen, Gayle Hahn, Jason Kerkman, Les Kimmons, Frank Lloyd, Larry Niemeyer, Kipp Ransom, Vicki Rasmussen, and Angela Smith.*

Absent: *Mitch Arnold, Linda Douglas, Marc Hultine, Jay Ice, Pearl VanZandt, Terry Wilson*

Minutes by *Cheryle Adams*

Gayle Hahn called the meeting to order.

I Public Comment/Announcements

October was Disability Employment month. Governor Heineman prepared a proclamation, and Don shared this at the SRC meeting.

II. Approval of Agenda

No objections to agenda. The agenda was accepted by unanimous consent.

III. Approval of minutes from August 14, 2007

No objections to the August 14, 2007 minutes. The minutes were accepted by unanimous consent.

IV Director's Report (Frank Lloyd)

1. **Case Reviews for 2007-08.** The calendar is being set for the reviews from December 2007 through September 2008. The review instrument has been developed and piloted with one team. Minor revisions were made. The Program Directors and the Office Director for the team will conduct the reviews. If available, an Emerging Leader on the team will be included on the review team.
2. **Customer Satisfaction Survey.** This will be an item for discussion at the November 14th SRC meeting. The employment Discussion survey has been in pilot for 2 months and became a statewide requirement on 11-05-07. The survey for IPE Planning and Job Planning are in development and will be implemented after the first of the year when the SRC has reviewed and made their recommendations.

3. **RSA - Quality Assurance.** Nebraska VR has been selected as one of two pilot sites to receive quality assurance training from the American Society for Quality. The consultant from ASQ is Grace Duffy. Grace is certified as a Six Sigma Black Belt in Process Improvement, Excellence and Innovation. Fourteen of the VR leadership will receive 4 days of training from Grace the week of December 3, 2007. Following the training, we will evaluate our current quality assurance practices and develop an improvement plan. This pilot will be evaluated by RSA and if successful will be offered to other state VR agencies.
4. **RSA - Promising Practices in Nebraska VR.** Following our program review this past year RSA identified 7 promising practices from Nebraska VR. These practices are listed and briefly summarized on RSA website. The practices include (1) Transition Scholarship; (2) Employment Warranty Program; (3) iChat Instant Messaging; (4) Nebraska Match funds; (5) Maintenance of Effort monitoring; (6) State waiver for client purchases; (7) Contract Monitoring, documentation and auditing.
5. **State Staff Training – We had 175 attendees at State Staff.** 153 were VR staff with the others being ATP, Easter Seals, Abilities Fund and SRC. Some of the topic included: Motivation, Returning Vets, Personality Disorders, Assistive technology, Developing a Marketing Plan for your team. All the sessions received very high approval ratings and positive comments.
6. **Strength Finder Project.** The Strength Finder instrument is being piloted with the VR Emerging Leaders group. The instrument was developed by Gallup organization to identify an individual's talents. Unlike skills and knowledge that can be taught or acquired, talents cannot be taught. "Talents are four-lane highways in your mind, those that crave your recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior." Talents support the Gallup philosophy that employers should spend their time matching an employee's talents to needed work activities and not focus on remediating an employee's work deficiencies. This philosophy has been developed after interviewing millions of quality employees around the world. The result of Gallup's research is documented in three of their publications. (1) First Break All the Rules – 1999; (2) Now Discover Your Strengths – 2001; and (3) Go Put your Strengths to Work – 2007

The VR Emerging Leaders will receive training in the use of the Strength Finder instrument and will identify their strengths. They will also evaluate the use of this instrument with staff in VR and discuss the implications of using the Strength Finder with consumers. I will provide updates on this project at future SRC meetings.

7. **Team Production Outcomes.** Each of the employment teams was recognized at State Staff Training on October 23, 2007. The production highlights were:
 - ◆ 3 teams achieved 85% to 99% of their goal.
 - ◆ 9 teams achieved 100% of their goal or greater. Jon Rathjen's team in Lincoln was the highest having achieved 119% of their goal.
 - ◆ For the last three years VR has achieved the following percent of its state goal: FY2005 – 97.0%; FY2006 – 98.9% and FY2007 – 99.7%.
 - ◆ During the past 7 years 3 teams have achieved their goal 5 times: Roger Glawatz's

team has the highest number with his team achieving their goal 6 out of 7 years.

◆ The team with the best seven-year performance is Bernie Craven's team in Norfolk with an average of 103% of goal for the past 7 years.

We are proud of the good work of staff and know that each successful outcome represents the success of 2,001 consumers around the state during the 2007 year. Next year our goal is 2,008 successful outcomes.

V. Old Business

A. New Staff Training Update (Pat Bracken/Larry Niemeyer)

Pat Bracken, Larry Niemeyer and Melanee Petersen are working on this project. Larry passed around the screen shot from VRIS "Instruction for VR Training Modules/Tools/Portfolio." The first set of tools was posted on the website in late October.

Several surveys have been developed, one for new staff and another one for the Program Directors that are assigned to the new staff member. The surveys will help assess which training modules were beneficial to the new staff person and those modules that need to be reworked.

The survey targeted at the Program Director asks for the comments they were hearing from new staff and their suggestions. Larry commented that most new staff found that the training modules were more in depth.

Larry distributed to the council survey suggestions on how to improve the training. One suggestion was to develop a website where new staff could post questions anonymously without being identified.

B. Geneva/Kearney Correctional Project Update (Jack Shepard/Frank Lloyd)

Jack has been working with the Geneva Correctional Center trying to see how VR can help the young women that are in this facility. Typically they are there for a significantly longer amount of time than the young men in Kearney.

Information concerning VR is being given to them as part of their orientation to help them transition back into their communities.

A pilot project has been created and staff is currently working with three young women who have mental health/behavioral issues. They have to have their GED or diploma before they can be put on a worksite in coordination with our staff.

Joni Minor, is the Program Director for the JJS program. She has worked with the JJS program in Omaha for many years. She is currently working with 180 students that have their GED. This program needs to be replicated around the state, developing a similar program in Lincoln, Sarpy County, the central area of Nebraska, maybe the Norfolk area.

VR needs to find a way to identify those young women-that have an impairment and are nearing their release date.

C. Client On-Line Survey Update (Frank Lloyd)

The survey targets the initial employment discussion. After the employment discussion consumers are given the opportunity to take the ten question on-line survey. The employment discussion informs the consumer about the VR program, gives the consumer a chance to discuss their situation and make an application for services.

The VR IT team provided the SRC council a demonstration of how the survey works. During the pilot survey approximately 40 people participated. The results showed that consumers were 100% satisfied.

This is given right after the employment discussion. When the person first has a chance to find out about the program, discuss their situation and make an application for services.

The next survey will target those consumers that have been through the planning process, after they sign the IPE.. Vic helped to develop these questions trying to refer the questions back to those comments made by consumers to CAP. Larry Niemeyer's office is piloting this.

D. Rule 72 Draft Rule on Purchase of Vehicles (Merwyn Vavrina/Vicki Rasmussen)

The VR Rules committee is reviewing purchasing vehicles for consumers. At that time purchases were only being made for those going into self-employment. In September a meeting was held at state office, with Pat Bracken the Chair. There is concern about funding this and the expense. An agreement was reached that an exception could be made by the Independent Living Director. Vehicles can be purchased for a consumer, but it will be under Independent Living. The policy will still state that VR will do this for self-employment, an exception for other purposes must be made by Dennis King—Independent Living Director. Under the current rule a down payment must be made, but it has been decided to have this being removed. The \$6,000 cap is still in place.

VI. New Business

A. New Videos on Job Retention (Jim Coyle)

The Employment Committee surveyed staff about job retention. This is a big issue—keeping consumers employed. They have identified 40+ issues involved with retention, but managed to reduce it to the survey to the top 14 issues.

Kelli showed a video “Being Successful on the Job Site” to the council. The VR offices will use this, having this constantly running out in their waiting area. The advantage of videos is that it could be taken home by a client and reviewed. This could be a good tool for transition students, working with them one on one or in a class setting.

This video highlighted many issues/questions involving employee conflict. The video would demonstrate a job scenario involving conflict and would give the correct solution.

They are also developing a DVD for new staff on how to contact employers.

B. On-Going ‘SRC Motions’ List (Don Crouch)

Don will mail out to the council members along with the agenda the motions that had been made and approved for FY 2007. Don will keep the list will be kept updated. A new list will be sent every time there is a meeting.

C. New Videos on Computer Basics, HELPS, etc & Pictures of Omaha West Office (Kelli Funk)

Kelli demonstrated all videos. New Hire computer Basic Training Video—takes new hires through the use of their computer. This focuses more on the acceptable use policy. Videos are available off the VRIS website. Any employee can watch these right from their computer.

New Hire Computer Basic Training Video. This is an overview of Mac operating system. This menu includes:

- Passwords,
- Dashboard
- Spotlight
- Email security policy
- Meetingmaker
- IChat/Jabber
- Web Help Desk

The “Helps Brain Injury Screening Tool” is another that is in DVD format. Keri Bennet takes staff through a 30 minute video highlighting basic information to help staff screen for brain injury.

Kelli also showed pictures of the Omaha West Office illustrating their open format.

Other DVD’s available are:

- Acceptable Use Policy
- Introduction/Passwords
- Mac OS Overview
- Back-up Procedures

VII. Reports

A. CAP Report (*Vicki Rasmussen*

In August three cases have been closed. The report also includes the 15 other cases Vic is working on, but not closed as yet.

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B. SILC Report (*Alvin Fox*)

The Money Follows the Person Demonstration Project as to be initiated by the end of August.

They will continue to pursue options for the Medicaid Buy In. Senator Wallman's office called to suggest they find someone on the HHS Committee to introduce it for them. A meeting has been scheduled with Senator Howard to pursue this.

C. ATP Report (*Angela Smith*)*get from Angela*

Number of referrals by the VR Office

16	Fremont
16	Columbus
51	Grand Island
33	Kearney
107	Lincoln
46	Norfolk
32	North Platte
140	Omaha
33	Scottsbluff
13	South Sioux City
2	Central State Office
30	Initially referred from other entities and became Title I Cases

Total 519 referrals for 10/1/2006 – 9/30/2007. Stopped requiring hearing and vision needs to be referred t ATP several months ago. Not including those types of referrals, ATP still received 376 referrals. In the previous year, before the policy change, ATP received a total of 206 referrals from VR staff.

Types of AT needs:

85	ergonomics
82	vision device
61	computer modification
47	other (general assessments)
47	vehicle modifications
40	ADL equipment
32	worksite AT
16	prosthesis
14	mobility dev
10	bath modification
10	communication
5	entrances
3	other home modification
1	ecu

An additional Technology Specialist has been added to the Omaha office to assist that office in serving northeast Nebraska and the Omaha area.

Another topic was Housing Vouchers for Home Ownership. Congress and HUD have authorized and encouraged Housing Authorities throughout the country to work with and assist low income persons in purchasing their homes. Less than 800 Housing Authorities out of nearly 3,000 have used this program, and less than 10,000 eligible low-income families and individuals have purchased their own homes. Consumers feel that the federal regulations are “too cumbersome” and the down payments are difficult to put together. Even with those barriers, out of the 10,000 low-income families/individuals, nearly 7,000 have purchased their homes with Section 8/Housing Choice Vouchers. The remaining 3,000 are under either the Moving to Work or Family Self-Sufficiency programs. It is not known how many of these families include people with disabilities.

List of those participating—if the housing authority is not listed, they have chose not to participate. If there is a zero next to its name, it means that the Housing Authority does participate in a HUD Home ownership program, but has not used any Housing Choice Section 8 vouchers to purchase a home.

Omaha	31	Lincoln	0
Kearney	0	Scottsbluff County	3
Douglas County	3	Norfolk	0
Northeast Nebraska	15		

D. Committee Reports

1. Client Service Committee (Les Kimmons)

The new chair is Kip Ransom

The new Client Services Committee - (chair) is Kip Ransom.

The satisfaction survey-that was initiated went over the employment discussion part of the IPE planning process.

Part two of the survey highlighted job planning. There may be several relationship-building areas in which VR can improve supports. Consumer input may help them find resources and find a job. There were a few discussion items indicating whether or not the people helping to fill out the survey understood the role of VR. What is the role for a consumer needing help, (related to when the client already has a job goal and the IPE booklet is not needed for that purpose or the consumer issues are not related to job planning)? Is VR meeting consumer needs or is VR losing opportunities?

Vic will present the survey results/suggestions to Frank, Dennis and Janet. They would like there to be a discussion as to what to do if a client needs help in filling out the survey and how will this be handled?

2. Employer Services Committee (Jim Coyle)

a. Luncheon with Senators

Tentatively scheduled is a luncheon with the state senators on Tuesday, March 25th. Kipp will be the MC for the luncheon. Sandy is putting together an invitation to senators, with a follow-up reminder and a fact sheet. Jim figures that around 50-60 people including their staff will be attending. This is to help highlight LB 300 which addresses the issue of allowing people with disabilities the opportunity to work for a state agency for two years and then to transition to permanent employment.

Scholarship program. Making progress with several businesses.

b. Employee recognition.

It has been suggested that SRC recognize one employer for their contribution. SRC would develop the criteria and would recognize them at one of the meetings—October or recognize them at State Staff in Kearney.

Another suggestion was that SRC honor/recognize the top VR team in the state each year. Not just honoring them, but also giving them a monetary reward. A team that gets their outcomes, has good customer service skills.

It was also discussed giving merit stipends to deserving staff. Select people that have made a significant contribution. Staff would not be compared to other staff. The committee will do some more research concerning this.

Jason made a motion to have an employer nominated for employer of the year for the state of Nebraska and the council will work on developing the criteria. Motion accepted by unanimous consent.

Select people that have made a significant contribution. Staff would not be compared to other staff.

3. Transition Services Committee (Jack Shepard)

Angela is the new chair.

Jack discussed the results of the Survey of Nebraska Secondary Schools - 2007

After a review of the survey results, the State Rehabilitation Council submits the following recommendations to Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation:

Acknowledgement: Results of the survey indicate Nebraska schools are highly supportive of Voc Rehabs efforts in the provision of transition services to students. The results indicate an overall high degree of satisfaction with the nature and scope of services, and the commitment of VR staff to this effort.

Recommendations:

1. Staff turnover and assignment changes impact the continuity of services for schools and students. Efforts to minimize the impact of staff changes should be identified and considered for implementation.

Strategies for Improvement: VR increase awareness of all VR staff, not just the one that provides transition services so it is not as big of a shock when the person changes. If at all possible, the contact may change to someone the school has already met.

Consistency and continuity of services can refer to both/either types of services or the staff person. We can maintain consistency of services through a more organized approach to Transition services (which is what we are working towards with the State Transition Committee and presence at the Transition Practitioners Meetings).

As to consistency of staff, I think one of the best approaches, is to help the school to know more than one person from the V.R. office, be it an associate or specialist.

Assign a mentor to the new staff person who is familiar with the school.

Have a back-up/alternate person assigned.

2. VR staff should make every effort to establish and maintain a set schedule of visits and activities with each school they are assigned to.

Strategies for Improvement: Discussing a set schedule to schools at the beginning of the year. Discussing with schools what will happen if changes need to be made to the schedule either by school or VR.

The frequency depends on the size of the school and the number of students, but it is helpful to designate a day of the week to be at the school, and then to be in contact with resource teachers/counselors when visits will be made, or to be sure the school is notified if not able to make it on the regularly scheduled day. Everyone understands that regular schedules are often interrupted with meetings trainings; we just need to maintain communication about scheduling.

3. Parental involvement is critical to the success of students during the transition process. Strategies should be developed to improve outreach efforts to parents in order to gain greater support for the efforts of the school and Voc Rehab.

Strategies for Improvement: Some things VR and schools can work on with parent involvement are the following: mailing updates to parents of services being provided, utilizing email to communicate with parents that are working, attending meetings and events at the schools, VR sponsored parent events, and increasing contact either face to face, through mailings, email, or phone calls.

Parents are savvy in keeping up with their child's progress through websites sponsored by the schools. Using the Action Planners to summarize each visit that with the student, and then a copy is mailed to the student. Maybe someday we will move to an electronic form of communication with parents, but for now the snail mail method is working. I do sometimes make evening phone calls to parents, especially to senior parents, if I am not able to reach them during the day. Our office is implementing an occasional evening phone bank, to reach people who are not available during daytime hours.

Greater use of email – staff indicate about 50% of parents have email.

Partner with PTI.

4. Survey results indicate many schools do not refer students with a 504 Plan or other students with physical disabilities. Efforts should be developed to increase the number of 504/physical disability referrals to VR.

Strategies for Improvement: VR staff will market services to school professionals that manage 504 plans. When completing orientations and meetings at schools VR will attempt to invite school professionals that would work with this population.

Probably personal contacts with school staff to keep them aware of the fact that such students may qualify for our services, is most effective. School nurses, counselors, and principals are probably the most typical contacts.

(at the state level – send notice to districts that indicated on the survey that they did not refer students on a 504 plan and other students with physical disabilities.)

5. Coordination of planning and communication among partners is critical to the transition process. School staff value VR's attendance and participation in the IEP process, but acknowledge attendance is often not feasible or appropriate. Alternative methods of IEP participation or input should be explored, to include electronic input.

Strategies for Improvement: VR staff can meet briefly with main school contact in regards to IEP meeting and what they would cover and verbalize to school contact their input. Also you can participate by doing the following: short written statement to schools, phone calls, emails, schools utilizing marketing information VR staff have given them to explain transition and adult services, school contacts informing VR staff of IEP in a timely fashion and what is needed at IEP meeting.

I continue to think that one of the most valuable services that V.R. Transition staff provide are interpretation/synthesis of various assessments (V.R's assessments, PLAN, ASVAB) and the vocational implications of those assessments. I often see resource teachers making notes when those comments are shared at IEPs. If staff cannot be present, such comments be shared in summary form through e-mail.

(at the state level – work w/ the SRS web-based IEP system for greater access for input purposes.)

6. Although school staff values the wide range of services VR can provide, primary efforts should focus on employment and connecting students to employers.

Strategies for Improvement: Utilizing resources in the schools and focusing school contact, parents, and students back to employment. Having school sponsored VR community events. Schools working on providing transportation to VR sponsored events. Increasing the amount of job shadow and touring opportunities in the community.

Somehow we need to get more creative in helping students as they search for that first job. They are motivated and ready to learn at that point, and we miss the boat when we don't get around to help with placement until their senior year. Maybe we need to create a job club within the larger schools and think how that might be implemented in schools with fewer students also. We do have more of a captive audience while the student remains in school, to monitor their progress on the job and to work on good work habits. Many of our Transition clients are not involved in after school activities/clubs, so a job club might fill a need for them socially also.

Meeting adjourned.